

As Gorillas Go, Six-Month-Old Patty Cake Is a Charming Monkey

By DEIRDRE CARMODY

In a sun-dappled cage on the south side of the Lion House, the superstar of the Central Park Zoo is eating sliced bananas. Suddenly she cocks her wizened head. Her brown eyes begin to gleam. She tenses and—with a burst

of utter glee—she pounces on a banana peel.

Her three keepers beam. It is, after all, the first time she has ever pounced on a banana peel.

This is Patty Cake, the baby gorilla of the Central Park Zoo, who is six months old this week. As a crowd-

pleaser, she is the hottest item in town. John FitzGerald, the zoo's director, estimates that if the crowds continue to throng as they have so far, Patty Cake will have drawn an additional half a million people to the zoo by the time she is a year old.

Susan Green, a bain home in the Bronx almost went to see the baby go every day since then, when the animal was three days old, intending to draw few sketches of her. (the Lion House is open to Green became so fascinated by the little ape and the trionics of her 8-year and stays until late afternoon, mother, Lulu, that she gone to the zoo from taking notes. She has done an

ous amount of research gorillas since September plans to write a book about Patty Cake.

"I've never even heard the experts describe the things seen here," she said.

The main thing that has puzzled Mrs. Green, and other experts as well, is the tenderness and care that Lulu shown toward her baby. According to Mr. FitzGerald, as been commonly held that gorillas do not know to take care of their offspring in captivity. Usually offsprings are taken from mothers and raised by humans.

Lulu is such a fantastic mother; she has done everything right for this baby," Green said.

Kongo, Clowns

Lulu paid little heed to the conversation. She was busy hanging through the bars, trying to grab the eyeglasses one of her keepers. When she failed, she reached down and undid his shoelaces. She then his pants cuff a tug good measure and, light-like, made a grab at the buttons of his breast pocket. She seemed immensely pleased with herself.

Meanwhile Kongo, the 8-year-old, 260-pound father, fed apples over the top of bars at the crowd.

Lulu and her baby were in a separate cage in the beginning, for fear that Kongo might become jealous—or simply clumsy—and harm the baby. When Patty Cake was 28 days old, she and her mother were reunited with Kongo, and the gorilla-watchers were again surprised by the male gorilla's tenderness and care.

At first, Kongo just gazed at the baby. Then one day he stretched out one of his mammoth hands toward the little gorilla, extended a leathery finger and gently touched the baby on the arm. Later, to Lulu's dismay, he became braver and more possessive.

A Bathing Act

One day Kongo grabbed the baby, sat down and planted her between his legs. Then, very carefully, he dipped his hand in some water and began washing the baby's face, fending off the frantic mother with the other hand. Finally, after about 20 minutes, he returned the baby to Lulu, who huffily proceeded to lick the baby's face clean.

"Kongo and Lulu are a very devoted pair," Mr. FitzGerald said. "They'll put their arms around each other or one will go up and give the other a kiss and seem to say, 'How's the baby?' The other day they put the baby down in the corner, and they had a good wrestle in the middle of the cage while the baby watched."

Luis Cerna, Richard Regano and Edelmiro Rodriguez, the three keepers in the Lion House (which houses several leopards, three lions, two tigers and two other gorillas besides the Kongo family), hover around Lulu's cage like doting parents.

It is now mid-morning and Lulu, an actress to the end, finds a patch of sunlight in the corner of the cage and sprawls on her back. In the manner of the great tragediennes, she drapes one arm across her eyes and flings the other above her head.

Then the superstar of the Central Park Zoo climbs across her mother's vast stomach, snuggles into a warm spot, closes her eyes and, exhausted, falls asleep.



Patty Cake, Central Park Zoo's baby gorilla, who is 6 months old this week, peering from her enclosure yesterday